

ACTION RESEARCH CONSULTATION:  
IMPLEMENTATION OF A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WITHIN A  
NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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## ABSTRACT

Performance management is imperative for the effective functioning of organizations, and this reality becomes more apparent when examining non-profit organizations (NPOs). This study describes a qualitatively-based needs assessment project within a specific NPO with the ultimate goal of designing interventions to address critical needs. The needs assessment was based in extant motivational theory utilizing a customized interview process with a sample of employees from the 88-member organization. Results suggested that time pressure, communication with management, unclear expectations, and difficulties with technology were key issues for improvement. The paper concludes with a discussion of the next steps of how this NPO is applying the information from this study in productive and beneficial ways.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research Method and Theoretical Basis.....	1
Agency Tiered Supports Consultation Program (TSCP).....	5
Host Company and Research Opportunity.....	6
Scope of Current Report.....	8
METHOD.....	9
Employee Characteristics.....	9
Needs Assessment Process.....	9
Target Outcomes.....	10
Material Utilized.....	11
Procedures.....	12
RESULTS.....	13
Transcription.....	13
Qualitative Coding.....	13
Data Screening.....	14
Identified Themes.....	14

Positives.....	14
Negatives.....	16
Documentation Requirements.....	20
Feelings.....	20
Wants/Needs.....	22
Billable Requirements.....	25
Feelings.....	25
Wants/Needs .....	27
Suggestions.....	29
DISCUSSION.....	31
REFERENCES.....	37
APPENDICES.....	41

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Meeting Lengths per Interview .....	42
Table 2. Guiding Questions for Needs Assessment.....	45
Table 3. Organizational Jargon.....	48
Table 4. Positive Themes and Defining Standards.....	49
Table 5. Positive Responses.....	51
Table 6. Negative Themes and Defining Standards.....	53
Table 7. Negative Responses.....	55
Table 8. Documentation Requirements-Feelings Themes and Defining Standards.....	58
Table 9. Documentation Requirements-Feelings Responses.....	60
Table 10. Documentation Requirements-Wants/Needs Themes and Defining Standards.....	62
Table 11. Documentation Requirements-Wants/Needs Responses.....	63
Table 12. Billable Requirements-Feelings Common Themes and Defining Standards.....	65
Table 13. Billable Requirements-Feelings Responses.....	67
Table 14. Billable Requirements-Wants/Needs Common Themes and Defining Standards...	68
Table 15. Billable Requirements-Wants/Needs Responses.....	70
Table 16. Suggestions Common Themes and Defining Standards.....	71
Table 17. Suggestions Responses.....	73
Table 18. Complimenting Remarks of TSCP.....	74

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Organizational Chart.....	41
Figure 2. Represented DSP Employee Status.....	43
Figure 3. Represented DSP Years of Employment.....	44
Figure 4. Frequencies of Positive Common Themes.....	50
Figure 5. Frequencies of Negative Common Themes.....	54
Figure 6. Frequencies of Documentation Requirements Feelings.....	59
Figure 7. Frequencies of Documentation-Wants/Needs.....	61
Figure 8. Frequencies of Billable Requirements-Feelings.....	66
Figure 9. Frequencies of Billable Requirements-Wants/Needs.....	69
Figure 10. Frequencies of Suggestions.....	72



## INTRODUCTION

Performance management is essential to ensure the effective functioning of organizations, but perhaps even more so for non-profit organizations (NPOs) which must operate on tight budgets, make extensive use of volunteer hours, and manage the constant threat of employee turnover, especially given the usual inability to offer competitive benefits. Baines, Charlesworth, Turner, and O'Neill (2014) note that in NPOs, a constructive relationship with managers may overcompensate for negative outcomes experienced by community front-line workers. As a result, it is critical for NPOs to build effective and efficient performance management systems to not only evaluate but also build relationships between management and employees (Baines et al., 2014), improve non-financial performance such as client satisfaction (de Waal, Goedegebuure, & Geradts, 2011) and develop employees, a precious resource for the non-profit industry. While much has been written about performance management systems, the majority of this literature targets large, for-profit entities. It is probable that some of the conclusions drawn in this literature, therefore, may not generalize well to NPOs due to significant differences in structure, funding, and market environment, despite the similarities between these industries. The current study will address that gap, utilizing a field-based action research methodology to design, implement, and measure a limited-scope performance management system in a service-based NPO.

### *Research Method and Theoretical Basis*

It is ideal for employee performance to be evaluated on a regular and systematic basis, which is often done utilizing either performance appraisals or a performance management system. A performance appraisal is often data-driven, has no significant

feedback process, contains little information for improvement, and often occurs on an annual basis (Seldon & Sowa, 2011). In contrast, a performance management system is a comprehensive process in which managers and employees actively work together to identify, monitor, and review employee's contributions to the organization (Aguinis, 2013; Seldon & Sowa, 2011). Active performance management (PM) will likely occur frequently and involves not only measurement but also problem-solving, planning and goal-setting. de Waal, Goedegebuure, and Geradts (2011) justify that clear and measureable goals are positively related to performance in NPOs and Seldon and Sowa (2011) reiterate that effective feedback improves employee performance, if the employee is satisfied with the feedback results (Rasheed, Khan, Rasheed, & Munir, 2015). A well-constructed PM system will also facilitate motivation in both managers and employees since it will include essential motivational components: realistic goals, clear and contingent feedback, and frequent monitoring (Reeve, 2009). This study provides a unique opportunity to apply well-accepted principles of human motivation, such as goal-setting theory, and customize a PM system that will meet the specific needs of employees in the organization. Therefore, a primary intended result of the needs analysis described here is to determine what incentives are motivating for the employees of this organization and how a PM system can be built and implemented to take advantage of those existing incentive structures.

This research project falls squarely within the theoretical domain of action research. By definition, action research is research on an organization during the implementation of a policy or practice for the purpose of understanding its effects and adjusting the implementation in real-time to reach its maximal effectiveness (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000). Typically, collaboration occurs between the researcher

and client organization to identify the problem and build a solution, and both parties involved are able to adjust or build areas of the study throughout the process to improve outcomes. This approach allows for the process to be cyclical in nature; interventions are developed, data is collected, analyzed, and presented, and further refinement is initiated to create the most effective intervention. As a result, it is important to note that the data generated in a study like this is usually not purely quantitative, and may not employ research tools and methods that are typical in psychological studies. Often, the richest data sources are qualitative and gleaned through archival data analysis, interviews, and content analysis, which demands that the data be approached inductively rather than deductively. This study is no exception.

Goal-setting, as a broad theory of cognitive motivation, has a long and storied history of effective use in performance management (Locke & Latham, 2004; Latham & Pinder 2005). Goals generate motivation by focusing attention on the present level of accomplishment and comparing it to the ideal level of accomplishment which creates a “discrepancy-based force” (Locke & Latham, 1990; Bandura & Locke, 2003). Several principles guide the construction and use of goals. First, goals for the employee should be set participatively by employees and the managers that directly monitor that performance. Second, goals must be specific, able to be measured, realistic, possible to obtain, and connected to available resources. An acronym that is often used to reflect these principles is SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. Specific goals reduce performance variability, while measurable goals provide clear information about progress that reduces subjective judgments. Realistic and attainable goals take the employee’s level of job expertise into account, a factor that can dynamically shift as the employee becomes more

experienced, and timeliness governs the availability of resources needed to complete the task at hand.

Of course, setting the goal according to these principles is only part of the process. First, the employee always has a choice to make regarding willingness to continue goal pursuit. Goal commitment is often overlooked in organizations; many assume that the employee will approach a goal because he/she are paid to do so (Shantz & Latham, 2009). Fortunately, if the established goal conforms to the SMART principles, the odds of goal commitment increase (Reeve, 2009). Second, management must provide consistent and meaningful feedback on the employee's performance in order for the goal to remain capable of generating energy. Good feedback involves both knowledge of results (how someone performed relative to a standard) and knowledge of performance (reasons why that person's performance reached the levels that it did). Normally, it would be the manager's responsibility to identify the employee's goal-performance discrepancy and then work with that person to set a high-quality goal going forward.

In addition to this methodological and theoretical base, this study also capitalizes on the fact that the action researcher is employed in a management role with the NPO being studied and had been tasked with the development of a PM system beforehand. Thus, motivation in the organization to complete the process is already strong and will help to facilitate the work that will be conducted during needs assessment and implementation. However, in order to define the research space and explain more completely how this action research will be carried out, a detailed description of the host organization is needed as well as an overview of the state's involvement in the work that is to be conducted.

*Agency Tiered Supports Consultation Program (TSCP)*

The foundation for this study was laid when Learning Opportunities/Quality Works, Inc. (LOQW) engaged with the Missouri Department of Mental Health (MO DMH) to participate in an intervention called the Agency Tiered Supports Consultation Program (TSCP). This program requires participating agencies to develop an internal system dedicated to implementing positive practices within their organization (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2016), but does not dictate *how* these outcomes are to be achieved. Typically, a TSCP process will involve a team of employees whose task it is to develop new practices and interventions to address critical issues. The state is particularly interested in outcomes such as employee turnover, lowering client/staff incident rates, and increasing positive interactions between clients and direct support professionals (DSP), some of the same complaints that LOQW has received from its employees. The timing of the needs assessment could not be better, as the momentum for the process has already been well-established.

Part of the TSCP process involves the designation of an executive employee to act as the agency chairperson. The management staff at LOQW selected the author of this paper to serve in that role and granted permission to build the needs assessment and implementations in parallel with the completion of this work. Because of the potential conflicts of interest inherent in this arrangement, special permission was requested and was granted by the Executive Director of LOQW and the MO DMH to do so. The LOQW collaborative team includes the first author as chairperson and two employees classified as administration. The remaining members include employees from mid-level management and direct support professional (DSP) positions. Finally, three individuals from the Missouri DMH have been installed as “external monitors” of the TSCP activities.

### *Host Company and Research Opportunity*

Learning Opportunities/Quality Works, Inc. (LOQW) is a non-profit agency in the state of Missouri specializing in direct-care social work. It is the mission of LOQW to facilitate a better quality of life for the individuals served by integrating them more effectively into their communities in a number of ways (i.e., obtaining employment). This is accomplished through direct support, advocacy, and connection to resources, and they specialize in being agents for persons with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities. Funding to support this mission is largely routed through the individuals that are served, rooted in state entitlements and charities such as waivers through the MO DMH, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, county boards, and the United Way.

As of November 2016, LOQW employed 88 employees dispersed amongst five office locations in northeast Missouri. The chart supplied in Appendix A describes the organizational layout. There are three general employee designations: administration, mid-level management, and DSPs, and the agency's services can be organized into three program domains: documentation destruction, employment support services, and community support services (Learning Opportunities/Quality Works, Inc., 2017). The documentation destruction program, also known as the Shred Shed, is managed by DSPs and personnel assigned to the community support program. The Shred Shed is a subsidiary of LOQW, providing opportunities for competitive employment, competitive wages, and developing employment skills, similar to the Goodwill retail stores established around the country. The Shred Shed and both other agency programs employ about 45 individuals at any given time.

The community and employment programs have a similar structure to one another. Management positions exist on three levels (Employment Consultant I, II, and III and

Community Services Coordinator I, II, and III). Employment Consultants and Community Services Coordinators manage a subset of DSPs (Retention Specialists and Community Support Coaches). Although Employment Consultants (I & II) are management positions, their duties are similar to those of DSPs in that their primary responsibility is providing direct support to consumers.

While LOQW has been able to complete its mission with regularity, recent realizations have generated interest in organizational improvement. Unfortunately, many of these realizations (by both managers and employees) have been negative. Generally speaking, it is possible to organize these complaints into “employee-based” and “production-based” concerns. An employee-based concern would be an issue rooted in the interaction between the employee and the organization (i.e., dissatisfaction with organizational communication, lack of autonomy, poor motivation, turnover intentions), whereas a production-based concern would be an issue defined entirely by an objective comparison of actual employee performance against a performance standard that is either internal or mandated by funding sources (i.e., low service quality, low billable hours, inadequate documentation). While distressing, it should be noted that these complaints are typical of employees in NPOs because of lower pay, poor benefits, and the likelihood of burnout given the nature of the client population (Maslach & Jackson, 1985; Hickey, 2014; Hickey, 2014). Extant research supports this conclusion, suggesting that job roles like LOQW’s DSP can contribute to difficulties in recruitment, increased turnover intentions (Gaventa, 2008; Robson, Abraham, & Weiner, 2010; Hewitt et al., 2004), increased stress and decreased job control, inadequate supervisory support (Gray-Stanley et al., 2010), and lower job satisfaction (Robson et al., 2010). Therefore, LOQW management has concluded that a

focused organizational development intervention is required as a first step to correcting and/or preventing these problems.

### *Scope of the Current Report*

To install a performance management system that is tailored to the needs of an organization, it is crucial that those needs be assessed directly and not assumed so that the proper incentives are used and the employees affected by the system have a participative voice in the process. In organizational development, a needs assessment is a process for identifying reasons for gaps in performance (Gupta, 1999). A needs assessment is a detailed investigation of all aspects of the organization that are relevant to the issues targeted, such as the nature of the problem from the employees' perspectives, the strengths and weaknesses of the way the company currently operates, and the kinds of incentives that might be utilized as they attempt to achieve more positive outcomes. Once the assessment is completed, interventions are designed, implemented, and monitored for effectiveness periodically so that adjustments can be made actively. Often, these activities must be completed while the organization continues to do its work, so time is "borrowed" from those primary tasks to complete the assessment. Therefore, the process is often slow and subject to "starts and stops." An organization-wide implementation, like a PM system, in an organization of this size can take two years or more to complete. This paper will describe the needs assessment process, provide a comprehensive analysis of the organization's current state, and conclude with an overview of the expected interventions and how they will be implemented.



## METHOD

### *Employee Characteristics*

DSPs (Direct Support Professionals) account for 71.6% (63 from a total of 88) of the organization's employees. Based on the workflow, this subgroup is at greatest risk of experiencing negative outcomes like the ones targeted in this study. Specific job categories from the DSP subgroup were identified for treatment: Community Support Coaches, Retention Specialists, and Employment Consultant I and II's. The organization chose these positions on the basis of existing performance data and clear linkages to the intended outcomes of the intervention.

Eleven focus group interviews occurred throughout the agency's five office locations. The 11 meetings in total lasted an average of 49.25 minutes (Appendix B). Thirty-eight DSPs chose to participate, representing approximately 60.3% of the total DSPs within the agency at the time of data collection (November 2016). The sample was primarily females (68.4%) working less than 20 hours per week (55.2%) and had been employed less than 2 years with LOQW (65.8%). The largest proportion of participants described themselves as Community Support Coaches (52.6%), whereas 21% expressed providing support for both employment and community programs. Detailed information regarding the participants in this work are located in Appendices C and D.

### *Needs Assessment Process*

Generally, needs assessments follow a particular course of events after organizational contracting: the participants are identified, the target outcomes are agreed, the data collection materials are created and/or prepared, data are collected, and then data are fed back to the

participants that generated it. In this section, each of these steps in the process will be described in detail.

Target Outcomes. LOQW has indicated that they are interested in the following outcome measures: 1) percentage of billable hours per week; 2) number of hours from service completion to documentation completion; 3) improvement in satisfaction with communication and work incentives, and; 4) improvement in organizational commitment attitudes. The target outcome for billable hours is 80% of work hours, while the minimum target outcome for documentation is 72 hours. Some of these measures are state-mandated, and so LOQW faces sanctions if these targets are not met consistently.

The MO DMH requires that documentation is to be completed and signed by the service provider within five days of service completion (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2017). The documentation task is an essential aspect of performance for a DSP at any organization that receives Medicaid Waiver funding. The state requirement has recently been relaxed, but DSPs at LOQW continue to be held accountable for the previous requirement of 72 hours. If an employee exceeds the 72-hour limit to complete documentation, they are reminded that the work must be completed within the five-day maximum limit to avoid state penalties.

The primary responsibility of DSPs is to provide direct support to individuals that are clients of LOQW. Providing services is also the primary source of income for the agency. Therefore, a performance standard exists that 80% of the total hours worked in an average week are spent on “billable” services. Billable services are organizationally defined as services directly (i.e., face-to-face) provided to a consumer as authorized by their funding source. Elements that can affect the billable standard include: travel time, documentation

time, scheduled hours, and management decisions that directly or indirectly influence schedules. One position within the organization (Employment Consultants), although considered DSPs, may not meet this standard due to the nature of their position; they provide services that are not necessarily “face-to-face” contact (e.g., development of plans). The minimum billable performance standard is at 80%; however, standards are ultimately set on an individual basis by direct supervisors, meaning some employees may be at a lower target due to job circumstances.

Materials Utilized. A semi-structured interview was developed specifically for this project. The interview included questions that centered around five key concepts (Appendix E). The five sections of the interview were labeled: Positives, Negatives, Documentation Requirements, Billable Requirements, and Suggestions. The two sections inquiring about performance (Documentation Requirements and Billable Requirements) each had two subsections: Feelings and Wants/Needs. Within each section and subsection, common themes were identified from the responses provided.

Recruitment emails, posted enrollment sheets, and informative text messages from direct supervisors were used to invite 63 eligible DSPs to participate. Management agreed to compensate employees for time spent in the interview at their individual rates. Because some of these interviews had to be conducted virtually, administrative assistants and managers were asked to serve as research liaisons and tasked with organizing group sessions. Interview sessions were constructed so that no more than five employees attended a particular session and were designed to last approximately 60 minutes. Demographic data were collected from participants at the beginning of each interview (e.g., gender, approximate years of employment, department, and job title) and additional objective data

were provided by the Human Resource department (e.g., employment status and date of hire). Employees consented prior to participation by reading and signing the informed consent as approved by the IRB (Appendix F).

Procedures. Employees that agreed to participate had to sign disclosure agreements that guaranteed the protection and security of their data prior to beginning the interview process. Employees were informed that their responses would be recorded confidentially and indicated that they understood the process the researcher would use to share their direct responses with the organization. Every interview session was facilitated by the same person, and each session always began with the same instructions. At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to introduce themselves to each other so they could feel more comfortable sharing information. They were instructed to provide information including their name, job title, department they worked under, and the length of time working at the organization. Data were recorded into audio/video files and stored on a secure device. Interview participants were debriefed by outlining the purpose of the TSCP program and a generic timeline of expected activities.

## RESULTS

### *Transcription*

Interviews were transcribed from the audio recordings manually. If participants paused, provided examples irrelevant to their initial comment, rambled with filler words (i.e., uh, umm, ‘I mean, like, yeah,’ etc.), or provided information that would make them identifiable, these data were replaced in the transcript with an ellipsis. If the participant used identifiers of coworkers, supervisors, administration, or offices, the information was bracketed with the corresponding noun/pronoun (e.g., [supervisor], [administration], [she], etc.). During performance indicator questions, organizational jargon was used regularly. Appendix G explains and defines common organizational language. Initially, the responses were titled by office to organize the recordings. Once the interviews were transcribed, the raw responses received new titles (e.g., Interview 1) to remove association with specific offices. It was necessary to rename raw responses because informed listeners could potentially identify respondents by their voices.

### *Qualitative Coding*

Interview transcripts were parsed thoroughly in order to identify key words, phrases, and clauses that could be organized into meaningful conceptual categories relevant to the purpose of the project. Once common themes were identified based on the responses provided, data were color-coded according to a categorical index that evolved as the transcripts were analyzed. Standards were developed as a means to define identified themes and distinguish clear lines. Responses that did not clearly fit into a conceptual category or were only mentioned once across the respondents were indexed as “Other”. The ‘Other’ category does not count as a content theme for analysis. Frequency data were collected for

the exemplars of each concept (e.g., word, phrases, clauses, etc.). The qualitative data were organized into sections, subsections, and common themes corresponding to the structure of the interview.

### *Data Screening*

At the conclusion of the coding process, 4.9% (30 of 616 words, phrases, and clauses) of responses were excluded from further analysis because they did not clearly fit into a conceptual category (including the “Other” category). Most often, elimination occurred because the artifact was clearly sarcastic, identified offices and/or persons, was not relevant to the question asked, or indicated a lack of knowledge (“I don’t know”). For example, in response to the question, “What do you need in order to perform better to reach this standard?” one respondent replied, “I could use an expense account that’s fully covered by LOQW [Interview 1].”

### *Identified Themes*

Positives. DSPs were asked to comment on positive aspects of their job and explain the reasoning. Eleven common themes were identified and defined (Appendix H). Many interviewees reported positive feelings about the organization; 91% (10/11) of the DSPs stated they felt positively about the services offered, including how they were able to deliver the services and types of services provided (Appendix I).

“My job helps people keep their job [Interview 1].”

“It’s never the same. The flexibility...can kind of change it up and put your own style on the services you provide

so that's kind of nice [Interview 8].”

Positive feelings about the consumers were also mentioned in 81% (9/11) of the interviews. Employees thought highly about their clientele and explained they were the primary reason they were working for the organization. For example:

“...That I like doing what I do. Helping my clients on their day-to-day life, job skills, interacting in the community [Interview 5].”

“I like the fact that I help people. I like to get to know the clients, because everyone is different. Everyone is an individual. And as you get to know the client, you get to know how to take care the best way you can or help them get along...I guess for me, it's all about the client [Interview 4].”

The remaining common themes identified in the positives section were stated in 64% of the interviews or less. DSPs at the agency liked the flexibility (64%) of their schedules, coworkers (64%), and specific aspects of the agency (i.e., mission, atmosphere, starting pay, climate; 64%). Of those interviewed, 45% expressed the preference for a progressive environment and the ability to make changes with the consumers they served. For example, one staff person said:

“You get to kind of think outside the box...because every consumer, they may be able to do...the same task but they maybe needed a little different way to learn how to do it, so you need to try to think of different ways to present it, which I like. So, you’re not constantly doing the same thing every time; you’re able to branch out and try to test some things...[Interview 4].”

Overall, the employees indicated strong opinions and feelings towards the consumers they worked for, what the agency stood for, and key elements of the DSP position. Appendix J provides examples for the remaining unmentioned themes.

Negatives. Sixteen themes were revealed when employees were asked to provide feedback on the negative aspects of their job. Appendices K and L show common themes, operational definitions and frequencies. Throughout the interviews, DSP’s communicated negative feelings towards leadership and management within the organization. DSP’s reported a lack of trust in management decisions (64%), beliefs that unqualified personnel were in management positions (27%), poor communication between management and DSP (55%), inconsistencies with schedules, logging demands, or coworker behaviors (64%), poor or no feedback on performance (45%) and weak leadership skills (36%). Poor management decisions and inconsistencies (65%) were reported most often throughout the interviews. Some DSP comment on poor management decisions and poor communication:

“It pisses me off when we’ve got staff in one room and



consumers in another room...we're being told to provide crappy services [Interview 2]."

"Communication...I feel like half the time we don't know who is responsible for what. Monthlies are due and we're all scrambling...and trying to figure out... I feel like the rules change a lot ...I feel like half the time I'm second guessing myself, 'Am I the one responsible for this or not?' Consistently, I don't know what my responsibilities are. In regards to office duties, I don't know what my responsibilities clearly are. I don't think they're clearly defined [Interview 9]."

Overall, responses indicated frustration with the amount of inconsistencies there are within their jobs regarding documentation demands, schedules, coworkers, and management. Inconsistencies were perceived to exist between managers, administration, and quality assurance personal in regards to documentation demands. Inconsistent schedules were said to be very frustrating; employees reported attempting to keep a routine with their clients, however, their schedule did not allow for it. Also, managers required certain standards of DSPs, but management behaviors contradicted those requests. Examples of these issues were:

"...Last time we had a discussion about how we need to keep routine with our clients, "Don't do anything last minute,

don't reschedule, give us plenty of time." Therefore, it's a contradiction of what actually goes on here [Interview 9]."

"[Manager] mails out all the schedules but when [manager] goes in to SET-Works and changes the schedule, nobody knows...that the schedule has changed. [Group home] has received six schedules that have changed. It's ridiculous.... when we ask for stuff on our schedule, it is never on our schedule....our schedules are out of control [Interview 2]."

"It seems there are people that are hired that don't want to do their job, that don't want to be there and they're always wanting people to cover for them and I'll be honest, I don't like [last minute]...maybe making sure that the people that you hire are actually going to be there...and I understand they're students... [Interview 4]."

"[Consumers] want to stay in a routine but their schedules are not allowing it [Interview 7]."

In 45% of the interviews, employees stated they worked in a negative environment reporting high levels of chaos, tension, and disrespect:

“[Manager] said something that made me feel so dumb...

[Manager] made me feel so small. One day I left out of the office because I was so upset, I just wanted to break down in the parking lot. [Manager] made me feel so small [Interview 2].”

DSPs also said consumer families, environments and lifestyles (18%) were a hindrance for their consumers. On occasion, employers and families had different expectations of the DSP than funding sources and the organization. DSPs said it was difficult and stressful attempting to work towards improving the consumer’s quality of life when the individual did not wish to improve, natural home environment did not allow for progress, or employers did not trust the consumer to work independently without DSP support. For example:

“Some of the consumers that I work with...I just feel maybe they could do better for themselves. I feel really bad saying this but they have the ability to get out and get a job but they don’t. To me, they are just living off the system. They could just do better for themselves but they prefer to get that benefit and stay home. So I get a little frustrated with that [Interview 9].”

Appendix M provides response examples for all common themes in this section.

Documentation requirements. DSPs were asked to comment on their feelings towards selected performance indicators as well as identify what they would want or need in order to improve their performance.

*Feelings.* When asked for feelings about the documentation aspect of their job, DSPs commented on the process of learning how to document, the documentation system, elements of documentation, and what has been instructed from managers, administration, and quality assurance personnel about documentation quality and standards. Six common themes were identified (Appendix N and O) and examples of each common factor is provided in Appendix P. Between 73% of the interviews, DSPs commented on thoughts about the intervention system/task analysis method used for documentation, or on the goals or steps processed into SET-Works (27%).

“Not a very big fan of the documentation in some aspects.

The amount of steps at a time. If there’s another way to address them in a more efficient manner... and the amount of time it takes for the documentation [Interview 8].”

“I hate it. They change it frequently [Interview 5].”

“It does feel repetitive. Part of my job when I’m job coaching is to get people into a routine and to have them doing the same things over and over again, and for me to be doing the same things over and over again help them until I don’t have to do

those things anymore. That's like a month's long process so it does feel like I'm recycling the same sentences over and over again...that feels tedious [Interview 4].”

“I wish when they're processing their ISP, sometimes that they'll come and talk...about strategies and goals with us... [Interview 7].”

Fifty-five percent commented on the expectations from managers, administration, and quality assurance personnel about information required within their documentation. DSPs said that expectations change often, unexpectedly, and without additional training provided.

“...As time went on, management changed...Once I got to using it one day and when the management changed, they come in and want to do stuff a little bit different than what the other management did, it kind of throws you off. No training, it's just ‘here's what you need to do now’ or they send you a message saying ‘well, this is changing...If you have any questions, you need to ask management’ or something ...[Interview 10].”

“We keep going back and forth. We keep getting told different things. Two years ago, we were told one thing and this year, we were told something else and now, we're

told...complete sentences, adjectives, and adverbs

[Interview 8].”

“I use to train people on this system when it got implemented  
and now they’re telling me my understanding is wrong

[Interview 1].”

Prior to the SET-Works documentation system, paperwork at LOQW was completed by hand. Within 36% of the meetings, DSPs commented on the positive aspects of the online, cloud-based system.

“I like it a lot better now with SET-works. We use to do it on  
paper. I like it. It’s a lot better [Interview 6].”

Although the system appeared to be appreciated, a few negatives (18%) were noted about the system itself, which is out of the agency’s control.

“...And a lot of times when you log on SET-Works after 8,  
you have a lot of issues. It doesn’t complete thinking  
[Interview 8].”

*Wants/Needs.* DSPs were asked to state what they would need or want that would motivate them improve performance on documentation. Ten common themes were identified

in total. Appendix Q provides frequency information on how often each common theme identified a want versus a need. Definitions on each are in Appendix R and direct responses are in Appendix S. On five occasions, DSPs voiced there was nothing the agency could implement that would increase their performance within this area; the staff person would need to be intrinsically motivated.

“It’s a self-motivating thing [Interview 6].”

“We have a computer we can use. All the computers in the office...are open to everybody. Even giving everybody their own laptop, I don’t even think that’ll be motivational because a lot of people have a computer at home. It’s just something you have to do. I’m motivated because hey, I want to get paid. If you don’t do your logging, you don’t get paid [Interview 9].”

Priority needs that were identified included more time (4 interviews) along with clear and consistent expectations (4 interviews). DSPs said they do not have enough time in their schedules to complete documentation if it is to meet expectations. However, at the time of the interviews, they were uncertain as to what the expectations were in regards to necessary information to include in their documentation. They did have opinions about why expectations continued to change:

“For us to be 100% accurate, it’s time consuming. Especially if we have to think about how to write it in complete sentences...either is fine, it’s the point of if they do ever replace the person that’s reading them, I think...setting to where they have to follow this for us. Don’t let them be changing the rules on us...if we get a different person, they’re going to change it the way they want it. I think if they’re going to do it, they need to set that one thing aside and train them on the way it’s supposed to be done and I feel it will make our logs more efficient [Interview 8].”

Motivational factors of lesser priority were also identified. DSPs said it would be nice to receive valuable, tangible incentives (5 interviews), however, no interviews listed this as a need. Within 8 interviews, DSPs said that if managers wanted to see improvement in performance, they would need to provide feedback on changes quicker, provide consequences, or inform the DSP of quality information they want in the system. These issues were identified as “Manager/quality controlled” themes. Overall, DSPs did not feel they were capable of improving their documentation performance because managers did not follow up, did not maintain expectations, did not lead by example, and/or did not input/remove processed information in SET-Works for staff to document on accurately. For example:

“A problem with [management] is [management] is almost too nice to our staff...way too lenient. [Management] really



gets upset when logs don't get finished in the 72 hours but [management] doesn't show that to the staff...and that's why the problem isn't being solved [Interview 7]."

"I need some negative punishment. I need a reward that's me getting in trouble not to get in trouble to get my logs done... I never get in trouble for getting unlocked so why would I stop getting unlocked? There's not consequences, so why do my logs on time [Interview 1]?"

Billable requirements. DSPs were asked to comment on their feelings towards billable performance standards as well as identify what they would want or need in order to improve their performance in this outcome.

*Feelings.* Six common themes were identified (Appendix T and U). 45% of DSPs stated the 80% performance standard was realistic and achievable for their job. 27% even felt the standard should be higher.

"It's realistic. Makes sense [Interview 6]."

"I think it could be higher really [Interview 3]."

Most often, employees noted factors that potentially decreased their percentage (73%), which implied that they were knowledgeable about the standard and what affected achievement.

“Mine has actually gone up because I’ve gotten a lot more clients...the only time I see it being a problem is say, you do have a lot of logs that you do have to get done and it takes you two hours to get them done, and that’s going to take away from your billable. I think there are some things that could be more lenient but I think it’s perfectly understandable about billable because that’s technically what we’re here for [Interview 7].”

However, 64% of interviews communicated they were unaware of their current progress towards the standard. Employees mentioned they did not receive feedback towards progress on a regular basis. So even though they knew the standard existed, they were unaware of how well they were doing:

“It’s something that people are saying, ‘This is where you need to be,’ but nobody is telling you where you’re at [Interview 1].”

Even if progress was reported, 27% of employees felt they had no control over their performance because the manager controls most factors that influence achievement towards this standard:

“It’s out of our control. If [manager] wants us to work 60%,

we work 60%. It's out of our control...we don't even know how to calculate it. We don't get feedback on how we're doing so we can't increase it, but we wouldn't be able to anyway because we don't make our own schedules. We really have no input on that [Interview 2].”

Examples for the remaining factors are provided in Appendix V.

*Wants/Needs.* Only four common factors were identified (Appendix W and X).

Employees stated for their performance to increase in this area, they would need to receive a progress report (4 interviews). Feedback towards their performance is a necessity for DSPs to motivate them to increase their performance.

“We get feedback once a year on how we're doing on this standard and that's when we get told we weren't doing what we were supposed to for that whole year. It's just once a year, head people show up and say, ‘This is what you've done wrong. This is what you need to fix.’ It's more negative than positive...[Interview 8].”

“But the problem is [manager] doesn't know where we stand as what we're working billable and what we're not...[manager] probably doesn't know how to figure it out [Interview 2].”

However, DSPs still state it is out of their control to increase their performance even if they knew their progress (3 interviews). They believe that managers have control of the factors that influence this outcome.

“I may not make 80% but it’s pretty well set up the way  
it is so you don’t go into overtime [Interview 9].”

On two occasions, it was said the employee would need to innately have the work ethic required that would drive he/her to improve performance. It would not be something implemented but the internal desire to perform to the best of his/her abilities. On two occasions, employees said they wanted accountability. They wanted monitoring of their performance along with feedback and encouragement from their manager.

“More accountability, maybe management saying you need  
to try and make up these hours...just accountability  
[Interview 3].”

Direct responses for each theme are identified in Appendix Y.

Suggestions. DSPs were asked to provide suggestions about what they felt would be an effective intervention to improve performance for the previously mentioned indicators. Appendix Z and AA show the ten suggested themes. DSPs asked for the opportunity to communicate with each other and meet on a regular basis with their teams (73%). They

suggested meetings occur between teams, other office locations, or with other DSPs around the agency thinking it would improve communication, provide opportunity to meet others doing the same job, and provide opportunity to express stressors of the job with other DSPs.

“I do believe it would greatly benefit us if we could get together once a month for an hour, or hour and a half [to discuss activities]...because we’re all so busy throughout the day that we don’t get to connect with each other and we’re missing opportunities for growth because we just don’t have the time to connect with each other [Interview 3].”

“More get-togethers...more staff meetings where we are all getting together and kind of talking a little bit. Maybe it would help break some of the tedium that I feel as a job coach [Interview 4].”

“Meetings with our own office and our team...more of... but even going and seeing how other employees or other opportunities work as well. We should all be doing the same thing and they might have something different to where we could start doing it in ours [Interview 5].”

DSPs also mentioned they wanted more intangible rewards (67%; i.e., appreciation, positive feedback, encouragement, and support) from their managers and administration. They provided suggestions for improved leadership (45%), agency or team goals (27%), more training (18%), active performance management (27%), tangible rewards (36%), and monetary increases (36%). Suggested between 36% of the interviews, DSPs asked for more control over their schedules, locations they provided services, and decisions influencing consumers.

“...not that we know the actual best, but for our input to  
be heard because we do work with [consumers] daily  
[Interview 7].”

Direct statements representing each suggestion are provided in Appendix AB.

## DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to conduct a needs assessment for a nonprofit organization. The process uncovered a large amount of data that indicated, among other things, that the target outcomes selected were important and central to the organization and that a performance management system could improve those outcomes. This system would need to support monitoring of DSP performance outcomes and increase work motivation. The needs assessment also provided valuable information on secondary outcomes that could be targeted (e.g., satisfaction). However, since the TSCP team identified focus outcomes and the DSPs as the target group prior to the assessment, the developing intervention is being crafted to address the target outcomes, focusing primarily on DSP performance. In this section, a framework for this system is outlined and linked back to the data gathered during the needs assessment process.

The needs assessment provided the agency with a vast amount of data. Results were not surprising according to previous literature which notes relationships with management is important in NPOs (Baines et al., 2014; Hewitt et al., 2004), DSP relationship with clients are valuable (Hickey, 2012) and reliability and flexibility are valuable criteria to DSPs (Hatton, Wigham, & Craig, 2008). Initially, there was difficulty bringing focus back to performance, as the interviews provided a “garbage can” opportunity for employees to voice long-hidden agendas and complaints that were not directly relevant. Over the first two weeks after the data were shared, negativity spread quickly since some of the themes were most likely considered uncomfortable by the culture. To quell this effect, executive staff requested the results to be shared with other members and the data were presented to the management team and the Board of Directors. Follow-up meetings were then conducted where further

information could be gathered about complaints, which created a strong motive to start fixing issues immediately. Fortunately, all parties eventually agreed that the original plan for design and implementation should be followed, and in the meantime, efforts would be devoted to short-term solutions for the negative reactions.

The TSCP team ultimately decided to emphasize data from Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the assessment. All parties have agreed to address the needs of the DSPs before addressing those things labeled as “wants.” While this approach may be slower and disappointing to some employees, identified needs are the most logical point to begin. As an example of an identified need, DSPs consistently identified numerous inconsistencies with the intervention/task analysis system, specifically regarding expected quality of inputs and the time to do the work. This system requires that employees list the “steps” provided toward client “goals” and accepts minimal documentation so that quantitative data reports can be generated monthly. However, management has recently increased data expectations (i.e., full sentences, capital letters, accurate punctuation, etc.) so the documentation can be easily understood by outside readers. Unexpected behaviors in the organization have occurred because of ripple effects on reporting, report construction, and time management. These unintended consequences are having profound effects on the organization’s throughput. As a result, DSPs voiced the need for clear and consistent expectations in this area, so it is being incorporated in the new system. Working with the Quality Assurance team, meetings have been scheduled to define these expectations more clearly and to construct training materials to support this transition. Once there is agreement among all parties as to the expectations for performance and the materials are completed, new performance management meeting scripts can be built to provide feedback and guidance to DSPs.



A second important outcome was billable performance. It became clear during the assessment that DSPs craved feedback about their progress on their job tasks. While the organization does have current standards, there is no systematic process for monitoring performance and communicating back to the DSPs, so feedback is sporadic. Sporadic feedback means that it is often negative, which exacerbates the problem. Therefore, all parties agreed that a significant part of the new PM system was to incorporate a systematic feedback process into the workflow. Working with the IT/Fiscal Coordinator, avenues have been explored to modify the company's key software (SET-Works) to provide clear feedback to DSPs on a regular basis. In this way, managers are not the sole source of feedback; evidence from the needs assessment suggested that the sporadic feedback observed may have been partially due to time constraints on management. Currently, progress has been made on this initiative; the IT/Fiscal Coordinator and developers for SET-Works have added elements to a report that allows management to generate billable performance percentage per DSP per month, and allows DSPs access to real-time progress data.

Another important theme in the assessment was dissatisfaction with communication between the organization and the DSPs. In the needs assessment planning, this issue was marked as a probable factor because the DSP position is "off-site." DSPs work in their consumer's environment whether that be at his/her job site, home, or in the community, and SET-Works is an online, cloud-based system which can be used remotely. The off-site job nature increases the costs of communication and reduces the motivation on the part of management to do it. Reliance on electronic communication also brings with it side effects. Relationships between employees at all levels are harder to cultivate, and it is easy for the employee to feel "separated" from the organization. The difficulties with this kind of work

arrangement, often called “telework,” have been well documented. All parties have agreed that the performance management system described previously in this section will positively impact the communicative networks that sustain the work of the organization, and discussions are currently underway to design more targeted interventions that will enhance communication even further.

The foundation for these discussions came from the data collected in the needs assessment as well. DSPs were encouraged to share ideas about how to improve performance for the entire agency, and one of the common suggestions was to implement regular team meetings, group gatherings, and/or other opportunities to interact meaningfully with their peers. All parties have agreed that this provides an excellent starting point for communication enhancement and that it can be integrated relatively easily into the performance management framework currently being designed. There are obstacles, however; the workload is heavy and fast in this organization, so it is difficult to schedule team meetings on a regular basis that work for everyone. As of this writing, one of five locations holds team meetings bi-monthly while the others have meetings only sporadically. Most locations reported that a meeting has not occurred in the last 12 months. Nevertheless, there is energy among the employees and management, generated in part by this assessment, to find ways to improve upon those results.

Finally, LOQW management noted that turnover rates were higher than desired, and these data support that perception. Of DSPs that participated in the motivational interviews, 66% of them were employed at LOQW less than 3 years. Turnover creates a number of problems, including an increase in training costs and threats to the quality of services (Hickey, 2014). There were a number of complaints in the interviews that could conceivably

be linked to turnover intentions; dissatisfaction with management decisions, perceptions of a negative environment, and time pressure were cited, for example. These findings are consistent with previous literature (Hewitt et al., 2004; Walk, Handy, & Schinnenburg, 2013). All parties have agreed that turnover would be a useful secondary target outcome going forward, and the new PM system should have a mechanism to detect turnover intentions and proactively work to address them. The first of these implementations will focus on building all three facets of organizational commitment (affective, continuance, and normative commitment), not only through a better PM process, but in other ways as well.

Limitations exist within this study. There was only one rater available to assess the qualitative data. Two or more raters would have provided reliability coefficients to justify accuracy of common themes. However, to maintain privacy for participating employees, it was agreed upon by the researcher and TSCP team that one rater would be sufficient for this field-based study. Secondly, Also, this study shared results of each section with the TSCP, administration, mid-level management, DSPs, and board of directors. Sharing the negative results identified overwhelming amounts of areas within the organization that require improvement, therefore, focus on the initial target outcomes was overshadowed. To remain focused on target outcomes, it is suggested performance indicator results be shared first, prior to other identified outcomes.

It is understood that a one-time assessment is not sufficient for an organization, and implementation of a performance management system without constant effort will not be successful. de Waal, Goedegebuure, and Geradts (2011) note that after the newness of implementation of the system, it will be taken for granted by management and without high attention, it has potential to fail. Seldon and Sowa (2011) suggest management survey

employees at least every two years to assess perceptions of performance management systems. Suggestions to continuously monitor the performance management system can be applied to any NPO to benefit the organization's growth and development of their employees. A newly developed and implemented system within this organization will take time and dedication by all participating parties. Locke and Latham (2004) offer recommendations for improving motivational metatheory, two including using introspection as a method of understanding motivation and acknowledge the role of volition on human action when formulating theories. Field based research in organizations such as LOQW, although provide opportunity to practice, could also be a starting point to develop future motivational and performance management ideologies.

The current study and research has been well-received not just by LOQW, but also by its peers and funding organizations. State representatives have contacted the research team regarding the quality of the work (see appendix AC) and the TSCP team will present their work at the Missouri Tiered Supports Summit later this month. The host organization is also very optimistic that the work described here will lead to gradual but positive change over time, and ultimately create a better place to work for the DSPs, a result that will also trickle down to the important clients they serve.

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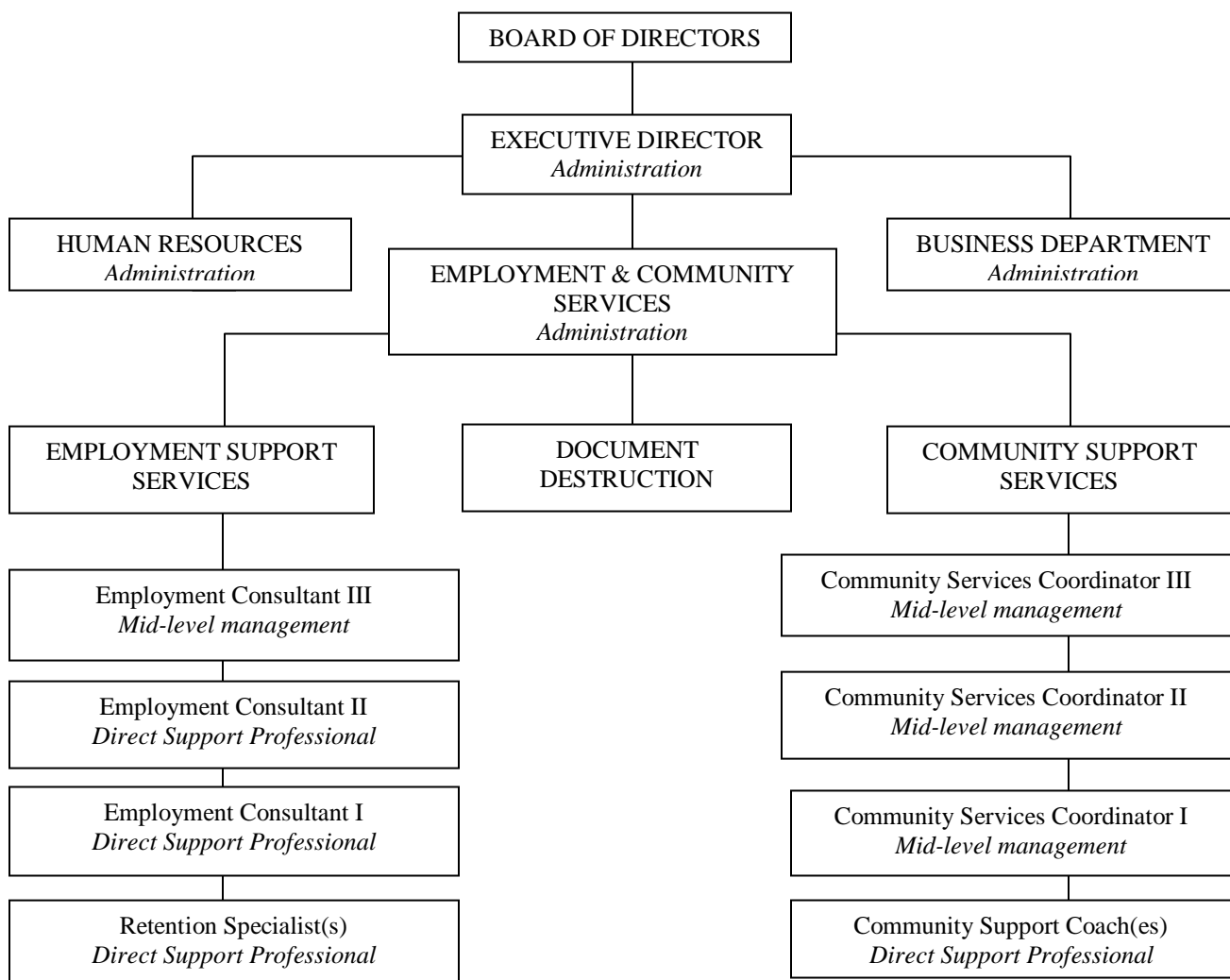
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## APPENDIX A

Figure 1. Organizational Chart



*Figure 1.* There are three levels of employees (administration, mid-level management, and direct support professionals). The agency's services are organized into three programs (documentation destruction, employment support services, and community support services).

## APPENDIX B

Table 1.

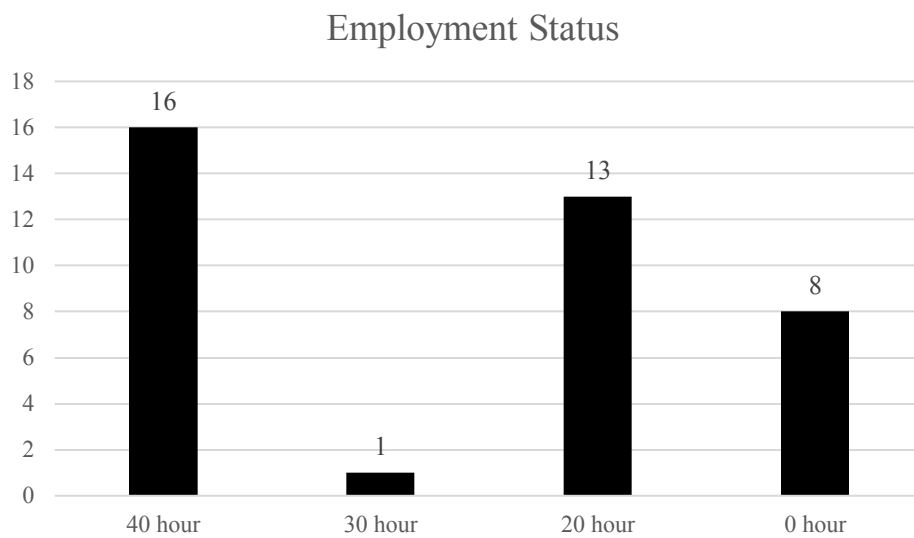
*Meeting Lengths per Interview*

Interview	Meeting length
Interview 1	44.75 minutes
Interview 2	53.75 minutes
Interview 3	35.50 minutes
Interview 4	66.25 minutes
Interview 5	47.00 minutes
Interview 6	33.25 minutes
Interview 7	57.25 minutes
Interview 8	55.00 minutes
Interview 9	44.75 minutes
Interview 10	57.75 minutes
Interview 11	46.25 minutes
Average:	49.25 minutes

*Note.* Seconds were rounded to the nearest quarter minute.

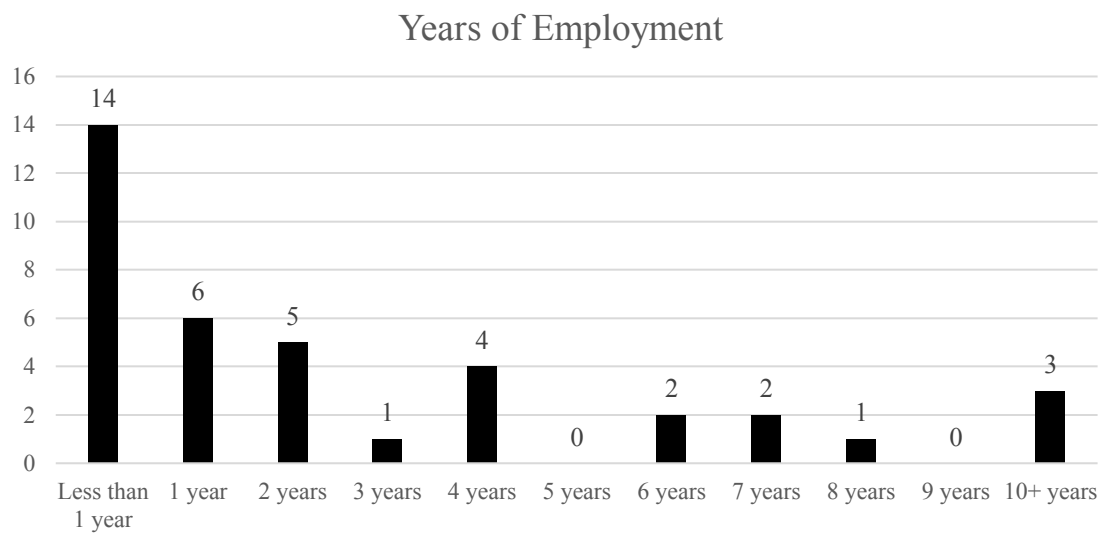
## APPENDIX C

Figure 2. Represented DSP Employee Status

*Figure 2.* Bar graph shows the participating Direct Support Professionals' employee status.

## APPENDIX D

Figure 3. Represented DSP Years of Employment

*Figure 3.* Bar graph shows the participating Direct Support Professionals' gender.

## APPENDIX E

Table 2.

*Guiding Questions for Needs Assessment*

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*Guiding Questions*

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1. Think about the job that you do here. What specific parts of that job do you feel positively about? Why?
  2. What specific parts of your job do you feel negatively about? Why?
  3. How do you feel about the documentation aspect of your job? What would make you want to do a better job completing your documentation? What do you need in order to do a better job completing your documentation?
  4. How do you feel about the 80% billable performance standard aspect of your job? What would make you want to do a better job at achieving this standard? What do you need in order to perform better to reach this standard?
  5. In a perfect world where there are not constraints, what would you do to improve DSP performance agency-wide?
- 

*Note.* These questions were used as a guide to facilitate discussion. Other conversation occurred between participants and the researcher throughout the interview process.

## APPENDIX F

**Angelo State University  
Institutional Review Board (IRB)****Consent to Participate in an IRB-Approved Research Event**

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Project Title: **Action research consultation: Implementation of a performance management system within a non-profit organization**

Investigator Name/Department: **Jocelyn Bright      Psychology, Sociology and Social Work**

Investigator Email: [jbright8@angelo.edu](mailto:jbright8@angelo.edu)      Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kraig Schell, PhD

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You are being asked to participate in a research event conducted with the approval of the Angelo State University Institutional Review Board (and if applicable, other relevant IRB committees). In order to participate, you are required to give your consent by reading and signing this document.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask any questions you have at any time before the project begins. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read and, should you decide to participate, sign this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. Upon request, you will be given an unsigned copy of this form for your records.

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and I believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

**1. Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of the study is to examine motivational factors associations with the Direct Support Professional (DSP) job at Learning Opportunities/Quality Works, Inc. (LOQW). Information collected will be taken into consideration in the development a performance management intervention for LOQW.

**2. Explanation of Procedures.**

The procedures of the study involve gathering focus groups of no more than five DSPs to provide free responses about the nature of the problems of the DSP position from your perspective, the strengths and weaknesses of the way the company currently operates, and the kinds of incentives that might be valuable in attempt to achieve more positive outcomes

within the organization. The focus group sessions will be recorded for data collection purposes. Sessions will last approximately for one hour.

### **3. Discomfort and Risks.**

The risks of the study are minimal, however, please read the risks section carefully. Some risks include but are not limited to: potential social discomfort due to providing information in a group setting and/or having responses recorded.

- Please notify the researcher if you have any questions regarding the risks or do not understand any part of the risks. Understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time if you feel uncomfortable with any part of the method.

### **4. Benefits.**

The benefits of the study include an opportunity to voice opinions and feelings about what is it like to work as a DSP at LOQW. Information collected will be taken into consideration in the development a performance management intervention for LOQW.

### **5. Confidentiality.**

Please understand that all of the research and evaluation materials will be confidentially maintained. The means used to maintain confidentiality are:

- Data, along with consent and debriefing forms, will be kept in a locked file cabinet and/or in an electronic file with a protected password.
- Only the investigator, not agency, will have access to raw data.
- The data collected is the property of LOQW, not ASU, and therefore, the liability for confidentiality rests solely on LOQW.

The dated approval stamp on this consent form indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Angelo State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects in research and research related activities.

Any questions regarding the conduct of the project, questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or research-related injury should be brought to the attention of the IRB administrator, Dr. Tay Hack TEL: (325) 942-2068, ext. 6121.

Any question about the conduct of this research project should be brought to the attention of the investigator as listed on this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX G

Table 3.

*Organizational Jargon*

Terms	Definitions
Billable Activity Records	Services billed towards consumers' funding sources; includes documentation of services provided.
Goals/Steps	Pieces of the action plan to be followed in attempt to achieve required outcomes as listed in the person centered plan.
Intervention systems/task analysis	The process by which employees are to document services provided for consumers; addresses steps taken towards achieving goals and outcomes.
Individual Support Plans (ISPs)	A document that results from the person centered planning process. The plan includes outcomes to be achieved or worked on by providers.
Nonbillable Activity Records	Time employees worked for the agency but is not worthy of billing a funding sources.
SET-Works	Online, cloud-based system used as an electronic file system; all services (billable and nonbillable) are documented in the system, includes staff timesheets.
Unlocked	When SET-Works 'locks' because time has expired to complete a billable action (e.g., documentation is 'locked' after 72 hours of providing the service).

*Note.* Common organizational jargon used around LOQW; terms are used throughout the document to remain specific in describing processes, etc.



## APPENDIX H

Table 4.

*Positive Themes and Defining Standards.*

Themes	Definition
1 Consumers	Individuals served
2 Service	Delivery, types of services provided, etc.
3 Administration/management	Administration and mid-level managers
4 Flexibility	Ability to arrange schedules, work hours
5 Ever changing/ opportunities for change	Progressive environment, ability to make changes with persons served, etc.
6 Coworkers	People, social support, care
7 Benefits	Agency vehicles, 401k, holiday, sick time
8 Agency	Aspects of the agency including mission, accommodating atmosphere, starting pay, climate
9 Consistent paycheck	Paid consistently, bimonthly
10 Stable schedules	Schedules are predictable, stable
11 Overall job	All elements of the position, duties, tasks, responsibilities, etc.
12 <i>Other</i>	Logging, training, communication, profession

*Note.* Themes identified as positives for the agency. Defining factors provided clarity throughout the coding process.

## APPENDIX I

Figure 4. Frequencies of Positive Common Themes

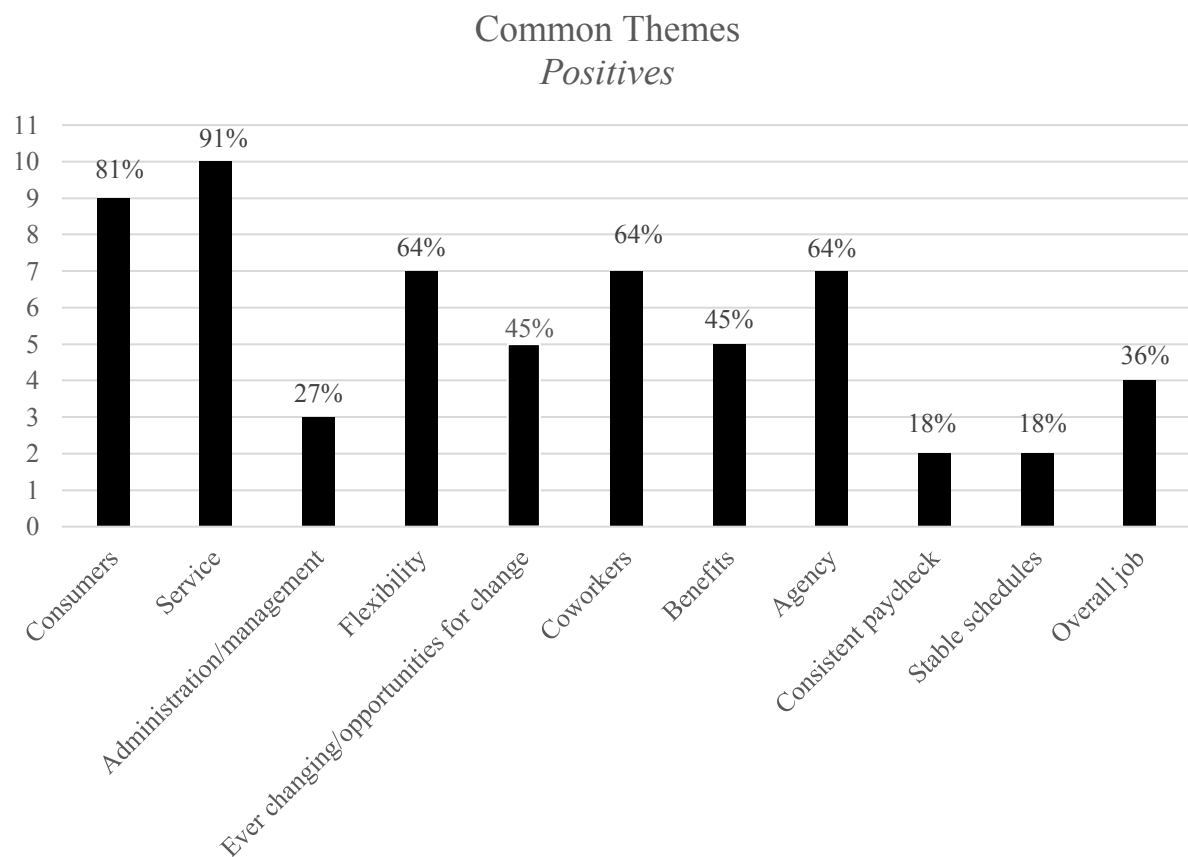


Figure 4. Bar graph shows frequency of common themes within the Positive section.

## APPENDIX J

Table 5.

*Positive Responses.*

Themes	Responses
Consumers	“That I like doing what I do. Helping my clients on their day-to-day life, job skills, interacting in the community.”
Service	“My job helps people keep their job.”
Administration/ management	“We’ve always had a big open door policy and they’ve relayed information off of each other and what would help...I definitely feel they’re my problem solvers. I feel I can go to them with pretty much anything.”
Flexibility	“I really like the flexibility. I have another full-time job and...they really work with me on my schedule...”
Ever changing/ opportunities for change	“Every day is different; no day is the same.”
Coworkers	“To me, it seems like a large part of the staff are here because they really do care and want to help people. The desire is in the right place.”
Benefits	“I personally enjoy the company vehicles...I do appreciate the company vehicles because that takes the stress off of me.”
Agency	“I’m glad this agency is here. I’ve been wanting to work with this agency for quite a while because I work at a group home before and I knew of LOQW...and I felt they made more of a difference than what we did at the group home, and I want to make a difference.”
Consistent paycheck	“I get a paycheck every two weeks. I never have to worry about ‘Is my paycheck coming, is it going to be there, is the funding going to be there?’
Stable schedules	“...I’m on one site all the time...my schedule is pretty [stable]. I’ve got the same consumers, same people. I suppose there’s good points and bad points to that...”

Table 5 Continued.

*Positive Responses.*

Themes	Responses
Overall job	“I really love my job, that’s why I work here.”
<i>Other</i>	“I enjoy helping someone develop a plan and helping them succeed within that plan.”

*Note.* Above are direct comments that fell within the standards of each common factor once identified by the data.

## APPENDIX K

Table 6.

*Negative Themes and Defining Standards.*

Themes	Definition
1 Consumers	Individuals served
2 Service	Delivery, types of services provided, etc.
3 Administration/ management	Administration and mid-level managers
4 Flexibility	Ability to arrange schedules, work hours
5 Ever changing/ opportunities for change	Progressive environment, ability to make changes with persons served, etc.
6 Coworkers	People, social support, care
7 Benefits	Agency vehicles, 401k, holiday, sick time
8 Agency	Aspects of the agency including mission, accommodating atmosphere, starting pay, climate
9 Consistent paycheck	Paid consistently, bimonthly
10 Stable schedules	Schedules are predictable, stable
11 Overall job	All elements of the position, duties, tasks, responsibilities, etc.
12 <i>Other</i>	Logging, training, communication, profession

*Note.* Themes identified as negatives for the DSP position.

## APPENDIX L

Figure 5. Frequencies of Negative Common Themes

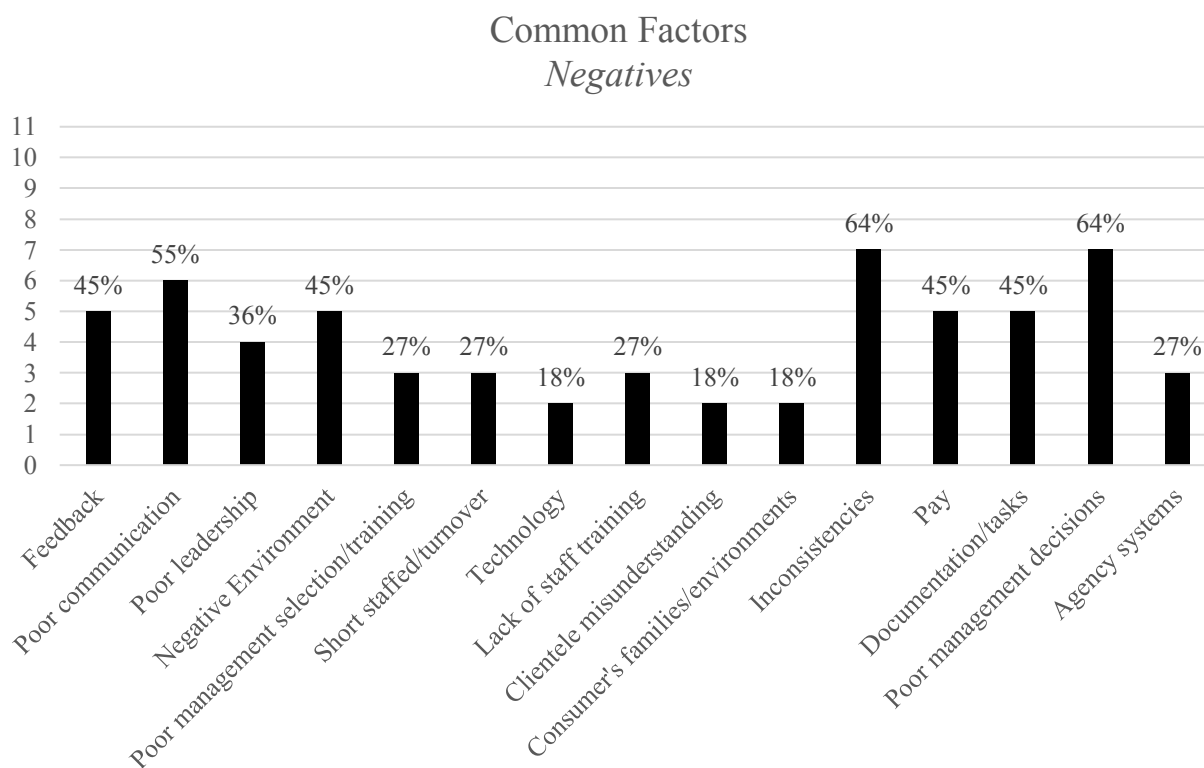


Figure 5. Bar graph shows frequency of common themes within the Negative section.

## APPENDIX M

Table 7.

*Negative Responses.*

Themes	Responses
Feedback	“I think it would be good sometimes to hear you’re doing a good job...I don’t remember the last time I heard that. Positive feedback would be great.”
Poor communication	“Because we’re all so busy throughout the day that we don’t get to connect with each other [DSPs] and we’re missing opportunities for growth because we just don’t have the time to connect with each other...”
Poor leadership	“Poor management...no reliability, no real knowledge. I don’t feel I can go and lay out a plan and my direct supervisor understand anything that I try to tell them. I think there’s a lot of insensitivity [towards staff], no reliability.”
Negative environment	“...try to tell me stuff to get rid of me basically...There’s been a lot of days when I come in here and I can’t get nobody to listen to me. Feels like nobody will listen to me and...I didn’t have nobody to vent to or nothing. If I have a problem, I’d like for someone to talk to me...”
Poor management selection/training	“I just feel like for a while the leadership hasn’t been real strong, communication skills are lacking. We need a highly motivated leader with good communication skills and that’s concerned with having a strong team instead of themselves. That’s been a real problem...and I feel we’ve just started hiring any person that comes in that needs a job instead of being selective and really finding a person that’s right for our agency. So, the turnover has been great...for Direct Support Professionals.”
Short staffed/turnover	Extremely busy and the pressure to find staff right now is horrible and it’s affecting us and how we do our job negatively. It’s adding a lot of stress...I don’t feel like we can effectively push for someone to get a job because we’re not going to have anyone to support them and help them get started in their job. We use to celebrate when someone got a job and now it’s just like ‘oh, okay, alright.’...So that’s pretty negative right now... Morale is not good because of it.”

Table 7 Continued.

*Negative Responses.*

Themes	Responses
Technology	“I’m not a huge fan of the technology in our company. Our computers are really outdated...computers are just really slow.”
Lack of staff training	“When I got hired, I only [trained] one time instead of the recommended three so I didn’t really know what I was doing of how to really support my client and how to recommend changes to [client] behavior without [client] getting mad...to this day, I still don’t feel like I can really support [client] in the best possible way...because I didn’t have that training.”
Clientele misunderstanding	“The employers themselves, I feel they can be obstacles in a way. When you think like what a coach is, when someone is coaching a football game, they don’t go out on the field during a game...the coach doesn’t catch the ball for the wide receiver, you know. He tells the wide receiver how to catch the ball or where he should be to catch the ball. That’s what we’re there for and I think a lot of times employers don’t understand that. There’s that constant struggle of how much I should actually be doing for the client and for the employer as it pertains to the job itself.”
Consumer’s families/environments	“Some of the consumers that I work with...I just feel maybe they could do better for themselves. I feel really bad saying this but they have the ability to get out and get a job but they don’t. To me, they are just living off the system. They could just do better for themselves but they prefer to get that benefit and stay home. So I get a little frustrated with that.”
Inconsistencies	“Honestly, I’ve been over a lot on my hours but I might be short now...it’s frustrating. Me, kind of being new.”
Pay	“The pay. I feel under compensated. Some people, not everybody. Overall, from top to bottom, everybody deserves higher pay.”
Documentation/tasks	“It’s like going against your belief system, clients who get so many benefits and spend frivolously...you feel bad because it’s like sometimes you feel like you’re helping them abuse the system.”



Table 7 Continued.

*Negative Responses.*

Themes	Responses
Poor management decisions	“Some of my things...[manager] lot of times goes to the first initial meeting that I don’t get to go to so I feel like I miss out on learning about the consumer some off the get-go. I wish I was there more, which is fine. I just feel like I’d just like to learn about them a little faster...”
Agency systems	“If it’s not working out with your manager, we don’t feel like there’s anybody else we can talk to. There’s nowhere else you can go in this agency, because there’s no one else that’s going to listen to you.”  “...the job coaching part is the thing I don’t like to do at all...I don’t like having that set schedule.”
Other	“My only issues are, because of the nature of that particular position, there’s coverages for me, making trainings and stuff like that can be difficult.”  “It’s like we’re all segregated. Each office does their own thing, because honestly, if you don’t go to those offices, you don’t know those people. It would be nice to get to know people [from other offices] more often; you can put a face to the name.”

*Note.* Above are direct comments that fell within the standards of each common factor once identified by the data.

## APPENDIX N

Table 8.

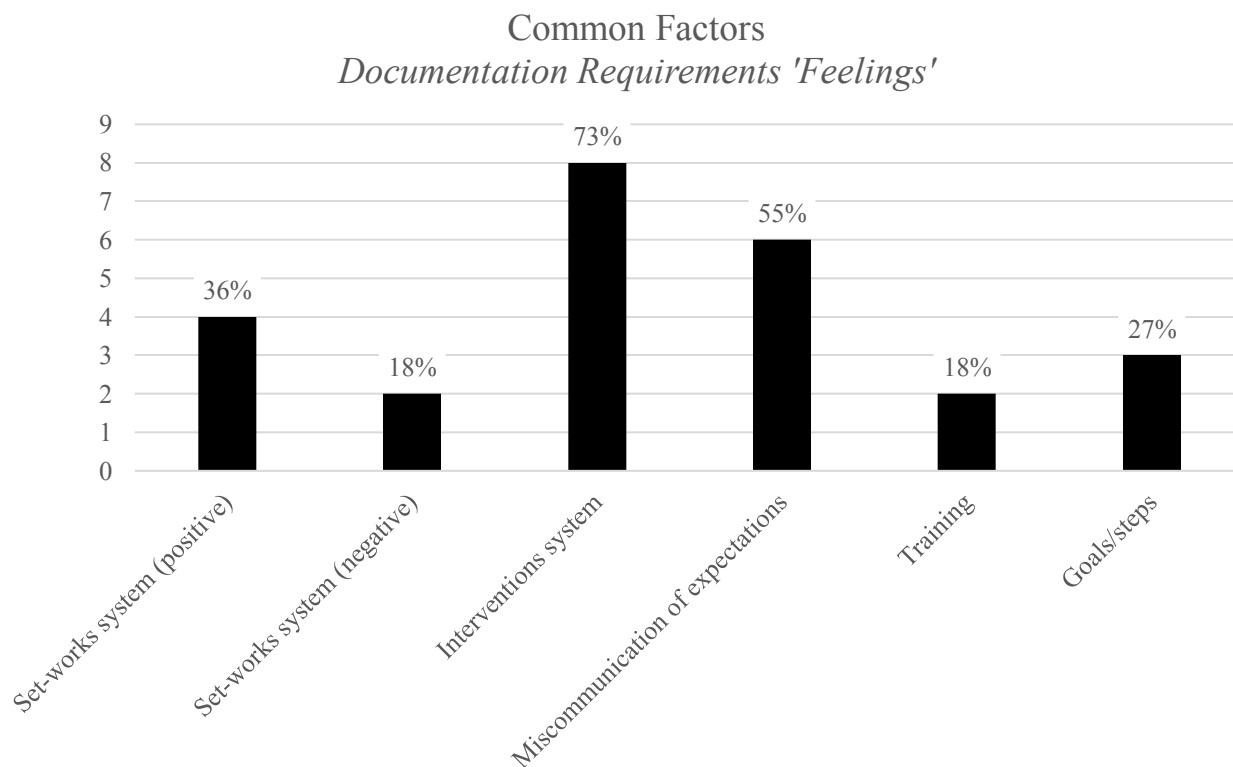
*Documentation Requirements-Feelings Themes and Defining Standards.*

	Themes	Definition
1	SET-works system (positive)	Positive feelings about the computer interface system
2	SET-works system (negative)	Negative feelings about the computer interface system
3	Interventions system	Feelings towards documentation system (task analysis)
4	Miscommunication of expectations	Information required to include in documentation
5	Training	Amount of training/preparedness for DSP position
6	Goals/steps	Feelings towards quality of steps, communicating changes to managers, irrelevant goals, etc.
7	<i>Other</i>	Managers following through, quality assurance, structured paperwork, feedback

*Note.* Themes identified as feelings towards Documentation Requirements for the DSP position.

## APPENDIX O

Figure 6. Frequencies of Documentation Requirements Feelings



*Figure 6.* Bar graph shows frequency of common themes as identified feelings towards Documentation Requirements.

## APPENDIX P

Table 9.

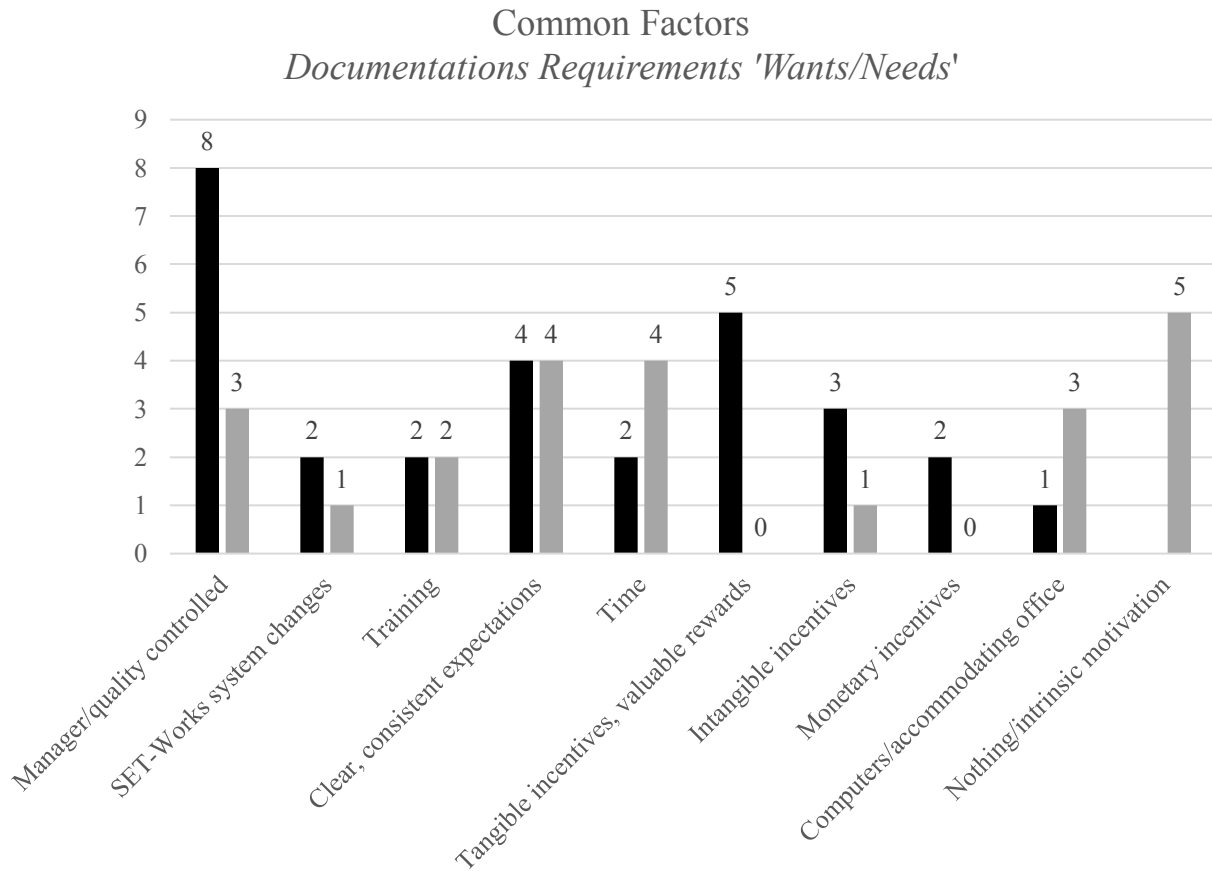
*Documentation Requirements-Feelings Responses*

Themes	Responses
SET-works system (positive)	"It's great. SET-works is amazing. At my other job, we're going to SET-works."
SET-works system (negative)	"I don't like that we get locked out after so many days and have to have someone reopen us."
Interventions system	"I was kind of confused on that because when they came up with this set-works things, they were talking like we didn't have to...type as much and now it's turning around to they've got [quality staff] sending us messages all the time saying we need to complete more sentence...because it's not them, it's the government that's making us do this and that's why they wanted us to be more specific and stuff. To me we're coming in logging and..."
Miscommunication of expectations	"We've had a couple people change that read our logs and so I know when I started, it was three different things...then I thought I was doing it right but then I got told I was doing it wrong but then my supervisor told me you're doing it right, so it was a constant bounce back and forth. So, that's where a part of the communication comes in too, but every time we get a new person that reads our logs, we have to start over."
Training	"The way I was taught how to do something... no, it's just I'm doing it all wrong and nobody told me until just now. Like, I'm doing it how I was trained and now it's wrong, just out of nowhere. It's coming from one consistent source...I've been doing something for a couple months and [quality assurance] is just now saying it doesn't work."
Goals/steps	"I've tried to talk about goals before with [management] but it doesn't really work."
Other	"I love the [quality assurance] aspect...it's nice to get [quality assurance] feedback. I know [quality assurance] is reading my logs. I know [quality assurance] is understanding what I'm saying...I like that a lot. A lot."

*Note.* Above are direct comments that fell within the standards of each common factor once identified by the data.

## APPENDIX Q

Figure 7. Frequencies of Documentation Requirements- Wants/Needs



*Figure 7.* Bar graph shows frequency of common themes as identified as wants or needs in order to improve performance towards Documentation Requirements.

## APPENDIX R

Table 10.

*Documentation Requirements-Wants/Needs Themes and Defining Standards.*

Themes	Definition
1 Manager/quality controlled	Feedback on changes, quality of information inputted in the system, consequences
2 SET-Works system changes	Changes made to the computer interface system
3 Training	Training, support for DSP position
4 Clear, consistent expectation	Stable expectations of what to include in log note
5 Time	Lack of time, want more scheduled opportunities
6 Tangible incentives, valuable rewards	Materialistic rewards
7 Intangible incentives	Verbal praise
8 Monetary incentives	Compensation increase, bonuses
9 Computers /accommodating office	Updated/more technology, inviting accommodations
10 Nothing, intrinsic motivation	No external items will improve performance outside of a paycheck
11 <i>Other</i>	Quality Assurance

*Note.* Common themes about feelings towards Documentation Requirements.

## APPENDIX S

Table 11.

*Documentation Requirements-Wants/Needs Responses*

Themes	Responses
Manager/quality controlled	"I think it goes back to being tedious. It's the same questions over and over. And when it gets to the point where the questions are so repetitive, and when the client doesn't even need that addressed anymore, they just skip it."
SET-Works system changes	"I think if we had an area of documentation where we had to explain what all we did and how the tasks were completed, I think that might be able to get a bit more detail and a little more information that could be helpful."
Training	"There needs to be something that shows what really valued information you need to put in. That maybe you don't need to word something so lengthy, that there's just something you can put down...I think there needs to be something that says what is valued information and you need to be putting in."
Clear, consistent expectation	"I think in my case, we are seriously confused most of the time...I don't know which way is the right way to log right now. I'm getting mixed messages...I don't want to get in trouble..."
Time	"Maybe...if it was made a part of a schedule. If they could set apart a 30-minute block in a day for you...if they actually scheduled the documentation time, but not at the end of the day..."
Tangible incentives, valuable rewards	"Like, I got all my logs done on time and I got a hat. We get them at the meetings. I didn't even get them done on time but I still won for getting them done on time. They draw a name...and I did not get my logs done on time. This happens every meeting, once a month. It's an invaluable reward. Like, last time they handed out planners. I could have benefitted from a planner a lot more than a hat I don't want."
Intangible incentives	"If every once in a while, someone said, 'damn, you're doing a really good job. Keep it up.' That'll be nice, too."
Monetary incentives	"I agree with the pay raise. I think that is something that give people incentive to work harder."

Table 11 Continued.

*Documentation Requirements-Wants/Needs Responses*

Themes	Responses
Computers /accommodating office	Some of these computers don't work or you have other people there and don't have a place to log...stuck thinking, 'should I come back or should I try to log on at home?'
Nothing, intrinsic motivation	"I don't feel there is anything that will actually make me motivated to do them."
<i>Other</i>	"Well, [quality assurance staff] should read all [activity records] because [quality assurance] is the bomb."
"I don't have that issue..."	"It's hard to put me in that situation to know what someone would need to what because I do it on time."

*Note.* Above are direct comments that fell within the standards of each common factor once identified by the data.



## APPENDIX T

Table 12.

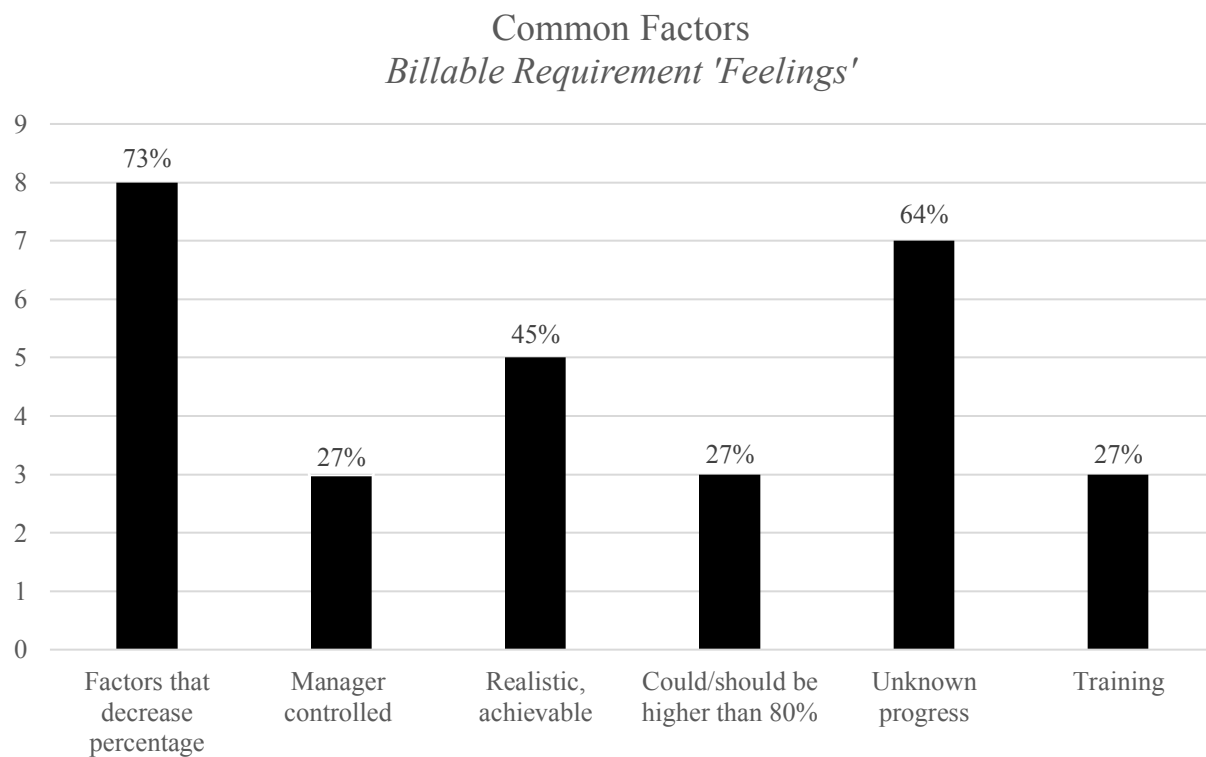
*Billable Requirements-Feelings Common Themes and Defining Standards.*

Themes	Definition
1 Factors that decrease percentage	Mentioned factors such as drive time, number of consumers, nature of position (e.g. Employment Consultant), training, etc.
2 Manager controlled	Believe standard progress is out of their control
3 Realistic, achievable	Noted standard was realistic, achievable
4 Could/should be higher than 80%	Feelings the standard should be higher than 80%
5 Unknown progress	Mentioned having no idea on current standing
6 Training	Includes responses that were unaware of the standard or unaware of how it is calculated
7 <i>Other</i>	Lack of communication when consumer's cancel

*Note.* Common themes about feelings towards Billable Requirements.

## APPENDIX U

Figure 8. Frequencies of Billable Requirements-Feelings



*Figure 8.* Bar graph shows frequency of common themes identified as feelings towards Billable Requirements.

## APPENDIX V

Table 13.

*Billable Requirements-Feelings Responses*

Themes	Responses
Factors that decrease percentage	"I'm finding out that when we write out all these sentences on these logs, it's taking longer to do...when we take more time, we're putting more nonbillable time in our timesheet."
Manager controlled	"Can't really control it if we wanted to because we don't do our own schedule...which is something that we've said several times is that we are capable of doing..."
Realistic, achievable	"I think that's reasonable."
Could/should be higher than 80%	"On the job coaching side, I don't see why it wouldn't almost be 100%, minus [logging]. I think they should always almost over 80%, I think it'd be very strange for a job coach to be under 80%, unless you have like a ridiculous amount of drive time to get somewhere and get back."
Unknown progress	"When [old supervisor] was here, [supervisor] would send us [progress report] ...[Supervisor] would always work with you to see what you needed to do...that's not happening now."
Training	"I was thinking it was 83%, it's really only 80%?"
Other	"I feel like one of our problems is with our staff communicating back to [management]...if a client cancels or if you have to cancel for some reason...obviously, they're not going to be at 80%, their hours aren't going to be made up...Because we don't communicate that clients cancel and time needs to be made up, so that's why hours are short."

*Note.* Above are direct comments that fell within the standards of each common factor once identified by the data.

## APPENDIX W

Table 14.

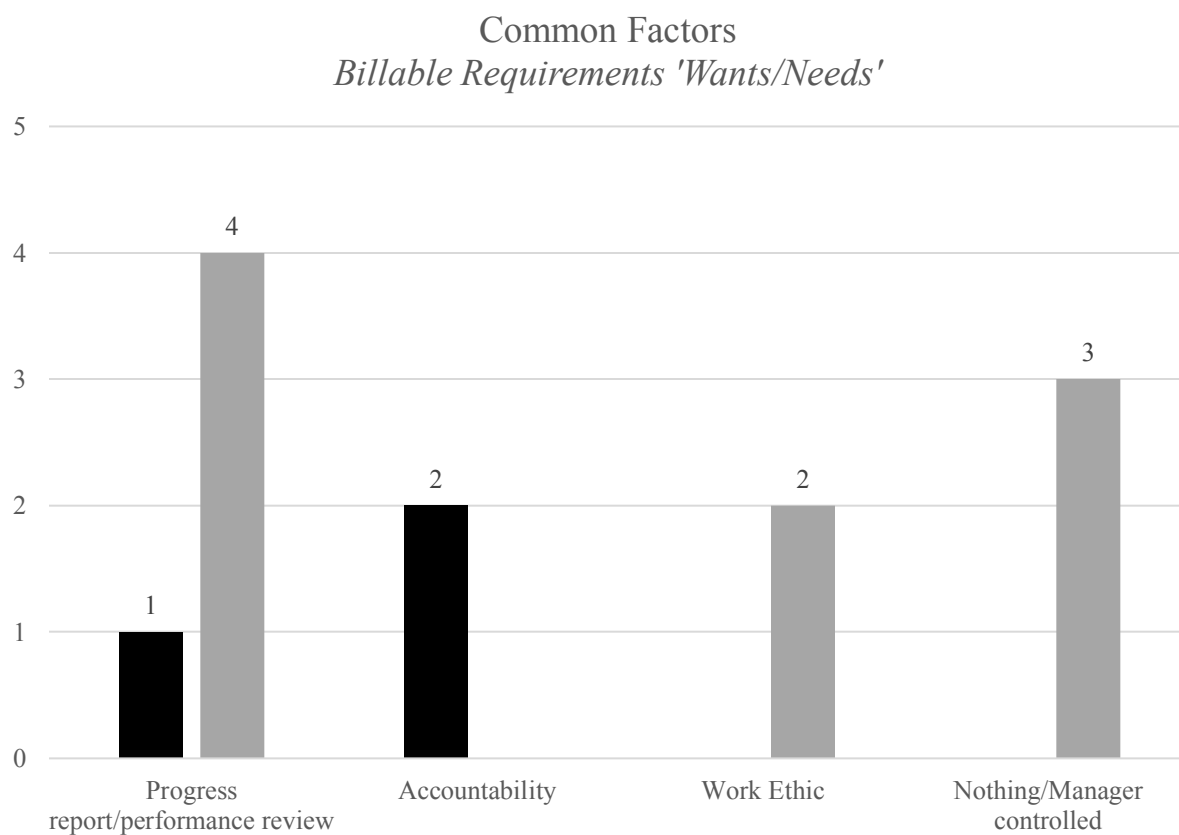
*Billable Requirements-Wants/Needs Common Themes and Defining Standards.*

Themes	Definition
1 Progress report/performance review	Feedback for performance outcome
2 Accountability	Management oversight/encouragement
3 Work Ethic	Innate desire to perform up to standards
4 Nothing/manager controlled	Uncontrolled by DSP due to scheduling responsibilities of manager, etc.
5 <i>Other</i>	Monetary incentive, clear expectations, factors decreasing outcome (e.g., less consumer cancellations)

*Note.* Common themes about wants/needs needed to improve Billable Requirements performance.

## APPENDIX X

Figure 9. Frequencies of Billable Requirements-Wants/Needs



*Figure 9.* Bar graph shows frequency of common themes identified as wants or needs for Billable Requirements.

## APPENDIX Y

Table 15.

*Billable Requirements-Wants/Needs Responses*

Themes	Responses
Progress report/performance review	"I think I'd need to know where I'm at."
Accountability	"I think you just need to...make up the hours [when you call in sick]..."
Work Ethic	"I think everyone is pretty much aware of our standards...I think it's probably just my work ethic."
Nothing/manager controlled	"For me, I didn't know how to fix it because you can't cut out your drive time...and they didn't tell me how to fix it."
<i>Other</i>	"We would need consumers that meet consistently and not cancel."

*Note.* Above are direct comments that fell within the standards of each common factor once identified by the data.

## APPENDIX Z

Table 16.

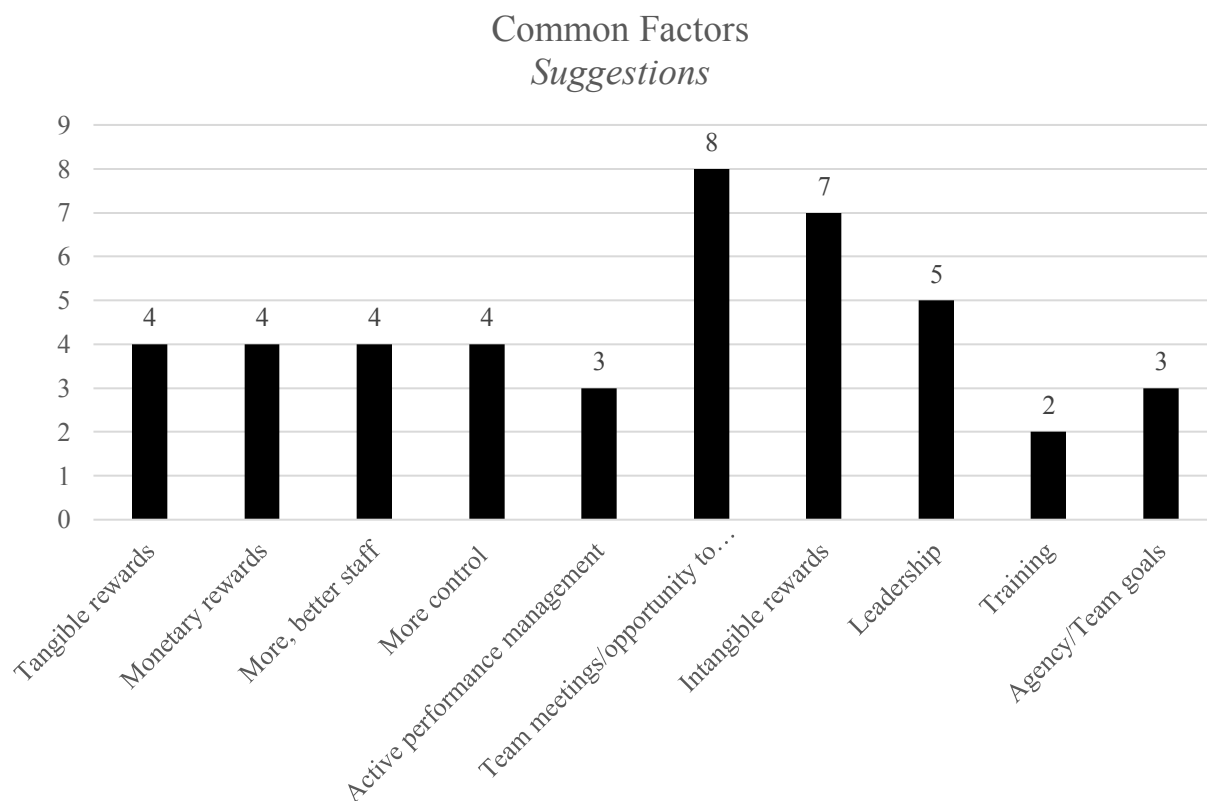
*Suggestions Common Themes and Defining Standards.*

Themes	Definition
1 Tangible rewards	Incentives, games/contests, team building events
2 Monetary rewards	Pay increases, opportunity for advancement
3 More, better staff	More DSPs, more selective hiring process
4 More control	With schedules, location of services (towns), decisions about consumers
5 Active performance management	Supervisor audits, personal/employee goals
6 Team meetings/opportunity to communicate	By office/teams, between offices, discussion of activities, sharing successes
7 Intangible rewards	Appreciation, positive feedback, encouragement, positive and clean environment, support
8 Leadership	Upper management training, less micromanaging from administration, selective hiring process
9 Training	Provided for DSPs
10 Agency/team goals	Group goals per office, team, or entire agency

*Note.* Common themes of suggestions provided to improve DSP performance agency-wide.

## APPENDIX AA

Figure 10. Frequencies of Suggestions



*Figure 10.* Bar graph shows frequency of common themes identified as suggestions provided from DSPs on what could improve their performance.



## APPENDIX AB

Table 17.

*Suggestions Responses*

Themes	Responses
Tangible rewards	“Give me coffee every morning, I might do a little more. And doughnuts.”
Monetary rewards	“Get a raise after so long and more opportunities for moving up, otherwise you’re just stuck. It’s hard when you’re stuck in a rut everyday with the same pay, you’re not going to try any harder, you’re going to get lazier and lazier.”
More, better staff	“Help for us would help boost morale because we don’t have time to get our stuff done...we’ve tried everything [to get help]...we offered overtime to get someone to coach...and no one would do it.”
More control	“Let us write our own schedules and have them approved.”
Active performance management	“Knowing where we have to be, but we don’t even know where we’re at so what makes us want to work towards even getting to where we need to be? More positive feedback would be great.”
Team meetings/ opportunity to communicate	“Have staff meetings later in the day...managers have always just move things around meetings. If you have a staff meeting, you move a person back half an hour or an hour on their schedule and you send it out. There’s terrible planning.”
Intangible rewards	“More staff appreciation. It’s always good to know that you’ve done a good job. So, ways to know that would be good.”
Leadership	“More training for upper management [DSP supervisor} because I feel that most of the problems are that they don’t really know what they’re doing either and I think a lot of that goes back to the fact that they don’t know our consumers, they’ve never done this type of work before.”
Training	“Could probably train people more...even with the training they give you, I wouldn’t know what to do when I first started.”
Agency/team goals	“A company expected standard...”

*Note.* Above are direct comments that fell within the standards of each common factor once identified by the data.

## APPENDIX AC

Table 18.

*Complimentary Remarks of TSCP*

Source	Comment
Executive Director	<p><i>To Committee Advisor:</i></p> <p>“I wanted to take a moment to tell you how thankful we are to Jocelyn for all the work she has put into our Tiered Supports efforts at LOQW. I realized over the Christmas break the amount of hours, effort and professionalism that this project has taken. We are also thankful for your contributions! Organizational change is hard. It is time consuming, frustrating and discouraging. It is not always easy to put the end result as first priority, not become defensive and realize that staff perception is everything. We are really working hard, and I know that Jocelyn frequently feels she is pulling us along kicking and screaming! Ha Ha! Actually, I think she might be! I know her dedication to this project will put our agency in a better place for the individuals we serve and for our staff. Jocelyn is professional and perceptive. Thank you for approving this project. Thank you for the support you are giving to Jocelyn to help us improve services!”</p>
Director of Employment and Community Services	<p><i>To Committee Advisor:</i></p> <p>“Thank you for allowing Jocelyn to complete her thesis project with LOQW and our Tiered Supports project. The work that she has done has been incredibly valuable to our agency. She has spent an unbelievable amount of time on this project and pushed us to look at our staff and processes in different ways. Jocelyn has worked with our managers and staff to continue to improve the quality of services the individuals we support. Again, thank you for allowing her to use our agency for her research project! She is one of a kind!!!”</p>
State Representative	<p><i>To Researcher:</i></p> <p>“I just wanted to say how impressed I am with the work that you’ve done with the Agency Team. You have utilized the employee data and team feedback in a thoughtful way that will make such an impact with employees, consumers, and the agency itself. Great work!”</p>

Table 18 Continued.

*Complimenting Remarks of TSCP*

Source	Comment
State Representative	<p><i>To Researcher:</i></p> <p>“I have recommended more than once to have you all present at the summit, specifically because "you" are their consultant. So, your process is different, in that most agencies don't have their own consultant. I think that your research leading will be interesting for other agencies to see and hear.”</p>

*Note.* Above are comments from executive members at LOQW and state representatives on the TSCP team.



11/20/2016

Dr. Kraig Schell  
Dept. of Psychology, Sociology, & Social Work  
Angelo State University  
San Angelo, TX 76909

Dear Kraig:

The project proposed by your student Ms. Jocelyn Bright titled, "*Action research consultation: Implementation of a performance management system within a non-profit organization*" has been approved in accordance with federal regulations 45 CFR 46.

The approval is effective beginning November 20, 2016. Please be aware that the protocol will expire one year from its original approval date. If the study will continue beyond that date, you must submit a request for continuation before the current protocol expires.

The protocol number for your approved project is #SCH-112016. Please include this number in the subject line of in all future communications with the IRB regarding the protocol.

Sincerely,

Teresa Hack, Ph.D.  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

*Dr. Teresa Hack, IRB Chair | ASU Station #11025 | San Angelo, Texas 76909  
Phone: (325) 486-6121 | Fax: (325) 942-2194*

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